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Pilgrimage to Sri Hem Kunt Sahib

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Pilgrimage to Sri Hem Kunt Sahib

—A HEAVEN ON EARTH

—S. Chanchal Singh Gandhoke
Special Executive Magistrate Nagpur

I feel myself very fortunate and blessed by God Almighty in having visited Sri Hem Kunt Sahib—the revered Taposthan of "Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji" where he meditated upon God for long times. My visit to this holy place not only quenched my thirst of many births but added to my love, devotion and faith in God.

The visit has given rise to new adventures in my life and I always think of visiting it again and again.

I started the journey to this holy and religious place on 1st October 1981 and returned back to Nagpur on 19th October 1981. But this eighteen days' journey has become a memorable one for the rest of my life. I am making an effort so that the readers may also be charged with an esteemed enthusiasm to pay a visit to this holy spot as early as possible.

The Tenth Nanok—Guru Gobind Singh Ji in his autobiography "Vichit a Natak" narrates the story of his previous life as follows :—

"Now I narrate my story,
that after meditation, how I came to this world.

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Where I meditated upon God,
stands there Hem Kunt Sahib, alongwith seven peaks,

And along side these seven peaks,
where Panduraj (the ancestor of Pandavas) had meditated for long times,
Here I maditated upon One Almightly Lord most deeply

And as a result of this rigorous meditation,
I became one with God.....
.....The Lord was very happy upon me,
And when He ordered me to come to this world,
Although I had least desire to leave the beautiful surroundings,
But at the same time I had no option than to fulfil His Will ;
—And I took birth in the Kalyug age."

The place of Sri Hem Kunt Sahib is really a gem in this world. Imagine, how much sacred it would be where Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji preferred to meditate and become one with God ? I was longing to have Darshan of this sacred spot whatever it may cost. And fortunately Satguru Ji gave an opportunity to make a voyage last year.

For the last three four years, S. Charanjit Singh Ji Bakhshi of Nagpur was also insisting me to accompany them for journey to Sri Hem Kunt Sahib. He had already made six successful trips to this place. Since I had no knowledge about the route and the

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difficulties coming in the way were also heard every now and then, I was making regret everytime under one or the other pretext. But Bakhshi Ji won in the long run. He totally prepared us for the journey. And beside me, my wife my elder sister and a few other relatives also accompanied the troupe.

As per programme already finalised we reached Delhi by train and collected at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib (At this sacred Gurdwara situated near the Parliament House, Bhai Lakhi Shah Banjara had cremated the matyred body of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji with utmost affection and devotion, full three centuries ago) Twenty five buses of pilgrims took off from Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib. Total strength of the pilgrims was more than one thousand. It was very moving scene. A devoted Sikh invited all the piligrims for lunch and the dishes served in this langer were so tasty and sweet that we don't even find on our dining tables. Some excess items were also loaded in the buses for requirements arising enroute.

At the time of start "jaikaras" were shouted at highest possible pitch and it looked as if the entire Delhi city had been echoed with the jaikaras. After Delhi, we stopped at "Khatauli" where one Gursikh served us tea and sweets. We were overwhelmed by the most heart-touching welcome accorded to us at every stop during the whole journey by different people. We really felt as if we were not living in this "Kalyug Age" where man for his existence is after man to cut his throat. And we started asking ourselves wheth er

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suchkind-hearted and noble people still existed in this world ?

The memory of the place, just crossing Meerut, where lunch was served to us, still lingers in our hearts even today It was a beautiful greenish carpet of grass specially laid by God for welcoming us in the manner of a "Green Carpet Welcome" given to us by nature.

We spent first night of our journey at Rishikesh. This city is about 1300 ft above the sea-level and is situated on the banks of River Ganges. Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji had also visited this place during 1st Udasi (Itinerary). In this old religious city there are adequate arrangements for lodging & boarding. "Sri Hem Kunt Sahib Management Trust" has also constructed a very beautiful Gurdwara on the main road where there is good arrangement for occommodation, kitchen and bath etc. for the Sikh sangat. Telephone no. of the Gurdwara Sahib is 229.

All the Gurdwaras managed by "Sri Hem Kunt Sahib Management Trust" should be highly appreciated for the better lodging & hoarding facilities available here for the public. "Sri Hem Kunt Divinity Institute" is also functioning under the auspicies of Sri Hem Kunt Sahib Management Trust which is imparting religious instructions to the students. Rishikesh is 13 miles away from Hardwar and 28 miles from Dehradun. Religious temples and institutions of various sects are common site here, and this is the last station of Northern Railway.

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The second leg of our journey started next morning as we reached Sri Nagar (of Garhwal State). This place is 67 miles away from Rishikesh, 3400 ft above the sea level and located on the banks of Alak Nanda river. It is said that Guru Nanak Dev Ji also visited this place during his 1st spiritual Journey The Gurdwara Sahib of Srinagar is also very beautiful and provided with all the facilities required for the public.

In Srinagar the branch of Punjab & Sind Bank has also played a major role in helping the needy people and providing them loans etc. This place also connects to several famous religious places like Badrinath, Rudranath, Kedarnath, Rudar Paryag, Dev Paryag, Karan Paryag, Gupat Kashi, Yamnotri & Gangotri etc, 91 miles away from Srinagar is the famous Hiudu religious place-Joshi Math, which is one of the four Maths of Shri Shankarcharya.

Although there are several temples and Dharamshalas in the city, but Sri Hem Kunt Sahib Trust has also constructed 'Gurdwara Dusht Daman Sahib' in the main bazar for assisting the pilgrims. Telephone no. of the Gurdwara Sahib is '21', "Joshi Math" is 6000 ft above the sea leavel, an(8 miles away from here is ',Laxmi Temple" and hot water spring alongwith.

Some miles away from this place is that mountain, a portion of which is said to be have taken by Hanuman Ji to Lanka, in order to bring Lachhman Ji to consciousness.

Our third camp was at "Gobind Ghat" which is

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also called the entrance to "Sri Hem Kunt Sahib". Gobin Ghat is 170 miles away from Rishikesh & 12 miles from Joshi math. It is very beautiful & sight-seeing place. Two grcat rivers namely Hem Ganga & Alak Nanda unite here. Two miles away from this place is Pandukeshwar and similarly Badrinath Dham stands at the 12th mile stone. Here we find a few cold and hot water springs flowing side by side. The international border of Tibet starts just 4 miles from Badrinath.

At Gobind Ghat there is a huge Gurdwara building built with the help of Sant Baba Mohan Singh Ji and where thousands of pilgrims can reside and dine simultaneously. There is a fullfledged dispensary also. The Gurdwara and dispensary are also managed by Sri Hem Kunt Sahib Trust like other Gurdwaras. Here there is also facility for all to deposit there excessive luggage and cash etc; before starting for "Sri Hem Knnt Sahib". Here people are also supplied with various conveyance facilities like special walking sticks, poneys etc Special bottles to bring Amrit Jal from Sri Hem Kunt Sahib are also available at Gobind Ghat Sahib. Since yatra to Sri Hem Kunt Sahib is undertaken in Junc & September months, as such the arrangements are also kept ready to administer Amrij to the aspirant pilgrims at Gurdwara Gobind Ghat Sahib. Though there is not much necessity to carry extra woollen garments in the months of June July, but the climate here is extemely cold in September and one has to wear sufficent woollen garments to protect oneself from

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cold,

From Gobind Ghat onwards, the journey starts with the site of huge icy mountains covering on all sides so far as visible with the human-eye. Every body at once feels the most cosy and spiritual atmosphere lingering as he ascends the mountains. After Gobind Ghat, we reached Gobind Dham Gurdwara, which is about 12 miles away from Gobind Ghat and 10400 ft above the ser level. The journey from Gobind Ghat to Gobind Dham usually takes 5-6 hrs. for a fully fit man, but we covered this hilly, dangerous and risky track in 8 hours.

During the jouney we found "Ek Onkar-Satnam Sri Waheguru Ji," written on various stones on both the sides of the road, and singing "Satnam Wahaguru" again & again helped in consolong the pilgrims to forget the dtfficulties of the journey and tread the path smilingly.

During this journey we found that all the relations of the man like—father mother, daughter, son etc. were fading out of human mind and everyone was in communion with the only "Satnam Waheguru" Before leaving Gobind Ghat, one Guru Sikh had presented apples to everybody and these apples helped us a lot during journey.

The atmosphere of the last phase of the journey i.e. Gobind Dham was mostly unbearable. The icy and chilled wind biew vigorously leaving much impression on the minds of the people. The people in turn were singing "Satnam Weheguru" and reciting, "Dhan

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Guru Gobind Singh Ji" to face the challenge. Although one can avail the facility of tourist rest house and forest guest house at Gobind Dham, but the pilgrims prefer to stay at Gurdwara Sahib where everybody is provided with good accommodation and "Guru Ka Langar" without any distinction of caste, colour or creed. Since there is too much cold at Gobind Dham, as such, the pilgrims are issued woollen blankets, as many as one desires, by the Gudwara Sahib,

Two miles away from Gurdwara Gobind Dham there lies the world famous "Valley of Flowers". In flowers variety, smell and beauty, this vally has no equal in the entire world. When we visited the flowering valley, we were told that one European lady named James Margaret was so much impressed by the scenary of flowers that instead of going back, she spent her remaining life in the valley itself fer collecting and smelling the wondrous fllowers. The place is 12000 ft above the sea-level and fully covered with the colourful scenery of the flowers.

That night we spent at Gobind Dham Gurdwara. In the morning we started the journey again. The ultimate distance between Gobind Dham and Sri Hem Kunt Sahib is 3½ miles. Because of steep ascent, this last leg of the journey was most difficult but interesting one. Much stamina is required to cover this small distance.

The chilly winds were weekening everybody's hope and determination. Everybody was concentrating on each step and finally when we saw the "Nisan Sahib"

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of Sri Hem Kunt Sahib, all were much over joyed. The mind of pil grims and everybody around was absorbed in spiritual thoughts. Everyone was seen applauding with joyful eries of "Sat Sri Akal".

Everybody was in the grip of spiritual attraction and 'BAAJ' of Guru Gobind Singh Ji was seen hovering & welcoming the devotees coming to the Gurdwara for "Gurudarshan' The pilgrims in return were joyfully crying "De Darshan Guru Mere, and finally we reached 'Hem Kunt Sahib Gurcwara,

The Darshan of this spiritual place on the earth is really difficult to describe as one feels the nearness of God and complete communion with the nature here. We so left that we have attained a'l the desires of this world and the next also. Some of the people were so excited on reaching the pious place that they were unable to talk to their colleagues.

On the sides of the Gurdwara are huge icy-mountains giving one a - "Heaven On Earth" sight, Facing "Gurdwara Hem Cunt Sahib Ji" is the sacred 'Sarover'- the most spiritual and hea'ing pool for the suffering mankind. It is said that any person hav ng incurable diseases is healed if he only bathes in this holy water.

This worth visiting place is 15210 ft above the sea level. The construction work of beautiful two-storied Gurdwara building is in progress. The platform of the Gurdwara Sahib is built 1 1 ft above ground level

The freezing temperature here compelled every one to be away from the Sarover as early as possible. The

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atmosphere was not allowing anyone to put hands in to the ice cold water of the Sarover for long time.

But soon by the grace of the 'Almighty', sunlight just made a warm blanket on the area and everybody was seen uttering "Almighty's Name " and having a quick dip into the Sarover. Everybody was eased of his long and tireful journey. I also got opportunity to make dip in the Sarover and fulfil the long standing desire.

I also thought to have a round of the holy Sarover, when I discussed it with some companions, everyone cautioned me from taking such risk. Since the path was very dangerous. But after some hesitation, five persons accompanied me in this adventurous and risky expedition. Our feet always slipped here and there but we completed this new test of life in $2\frac{1}{2}$ hrs, by fighting heavy odds with a smile on the face.

Evening time was approaching near and we started girding up leons for the return journey to Gobind Dham since at night it is very difficult to stay at Sri Hem Kunt Sahib due to deficiency of oxygen.

Regarding this journey, one instance is worth. mentioning : while going from Gobind Ghat to "Sri Hem Kunt Sahib " my elder sister slipped off from the path and was thrown some hundred feet below. Everybody suddenly went pale and a feeiing of depression could easily be see on the faces.

The fall really left no chance of her survival, but to our astonishment and joy she was saved without even a

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scratch on her body. It so happened that while falling, she chanced to collide with a tree and she tightly held one of the branches of the tree, and this action saved her, This incident was not a miracle but a "Gurukripa" itslf on us.

Similarly two Kabli-Sikhs who were about 90 years old blessed me on the forehead and I thought as if I really had a blessing from my father from whom I had been separated since my childhood.

All the buses, in which we completed our journey were fitted with sophisticated tape-recorders and we had a good time always listening to sweet kirtan tunes.

During the entire journey, we made a rule to get up at 3 a m. in the morning. Then after having a bath in icy cold waters we used to meditate on God which not only changed our normal routine life, but also gave us new strength and spirit "mentally, physically and. spiritually".

The description of Sri Hem Kunt Sahib -the highly spiritual place on the earth is beyond description and would repuire many births to explain its exact picture. Well, I would like each of us to visit this holy place, atleast once, in one' s life and as the proverb goes—" One knows the sweetness and taste of honey only when one himseif tastes it"-I am sure after making one trip, people would start flocking to this lovely spot again and again. If anybody wants more details about the visit, he can contact me at the following address :--

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Guru Nanak Dev Ji Chowk,
(Kadbi Chowk), Nagpur-440004 (India.)

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DIAMONDS FOR YOU

Don't Merely Complain : Do Something

It should be our conviction that every individual can do a great deal to improve the world, if he realises how much power he has within him and tries to use it effectively. Very often, however we are inclined to merely complain about how bad the world is without doing anything to improve it. Such complaints accomplish nothing.

It should be our objective to brighten the atmosphere by reducing complaints and encouraging positive action For this, the attitude of each one of us should be, 'Let me not complain, but do something to brighten the world :

CHANCHAL SINGH

(A Beginner at 53)

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